

**Written Testimony in Support of  
Utility Regulation - Consideration of Climate and Labor (SB 656)  
Senate Finance Committee | February 25, 2020**

We, the undersigned groups, write in support of legislation requiring the Public Service Commission (PSC) to implement a “climate test” during its decision-making processes.

The world’s leading climate scientists warn that we have 10 short years to dramatically reduce our climate-disrupting emissions. The State of Maryland has made commitments to reducing climate change, starting with a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent by 2030--a target the General Assembly is considering increasing this year. To reach these goals, Maryland’s administrative agencies must also factor climate into their decision-making process. This consideration is especially important for Maryland’s Public Service Commission, which approves all large facilities that generate electricity and oversees gas utility companies.

Notwithstanding Maryland’s climate commitments and the significant amount of greenhouse gases the State’s electricity generators emit, the PSC currently does not consider climate in its decision-making process. This was confirmed last year when the PSC approved a former coal plant repowering to gas. In dismissing an appeal of the PSC’s decision to approve the repowered facility, brought in part on climate grounds, the PSC stated that its governing statute “does not specifically or generally require considerations regarding climate change.” The PSC staff agreed, writing in its brief that “the Commission has never required that any consideration of climate change and its effects be included in a Proposed Order or CPCN proceeding . . . . Staff is bound by Commission precedent.”

In a world that is both literally and metaphorically on fire, state agencies should climate change and it makes no sense for the PSC – a core part of state government and the principal regulator of electricity in Maryland – to not take into consideration the State’s own climate commitments.

In order to ensure proper consideration of Maryland’s climate commitments, the PSC must:

- Consider climate change in its regulation of the electricity sector, based upon the best available scientific information recognized by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and achieving our state climate goals.
- Consider climate impacts when reviewing applications for electricity generating facilities, and when it approves the sites for new facilities.

Additionally, state agencies must address the climate impacts of proposed power plants (based upon the best available scientific information recognized by the IPCC) when providing input to the PSC regarding applications for new facilities.

This “climate test” provides a necessary and straightforward solution to the current significant flaw in Maryland’s climate efforts due to the PSC not considering climate change when making energy-related decisions.

For these reasons we, the undersigned organizations, urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 656

Signed:

350 Baltimore  
350 Montgomery County  
Allegany County Women’s Action Coalition  
Baltimore-Washington Conference of The  
United Methodist Church  
Bay Hundred Citizens for a Just Society  
Calvert Citizens for a Healthy Community  
CCAN Action Fund  
Cedar Haven Civic Association on the Patuxent  
River, Inc.  
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church  
Chapman Forest Foundation  
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Citizens Advancing Renewable Energy Sources  
Clean Air Prince George's  
Climate Law & Policy Project  
Earth Forum of Howard county  
Eastern Panhandle Green Coalition  
Emmanuel United Methodist Church, Laurel  
Environmental Justice Ministry  
Food & Water Action  
Frack-Free Frostburg  
Friends Meeting of Washington Committee on  
Peace & Social Concerns  
Greenbelt Climate Action Network  
Harford County Climate Action  
Howard County Climate Action  
Indivisible Howard County  
Institute for Energy and Environmental Research  
Interfaith Power & Light DC  
Interfaith Power & Light NoVA  
Interfaith Power & Lights MD  
Jefferson County Vision  
League of Women Voters of Maryland

Maryland League of Conservation Voters  
Maryland Legislative Coalition  
Mattawoman Watershed Society  
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate  
Solutions  
Mountainside Education and Enrichment, Inc.  
Neighborhood Sun  
New Baltimore Green Forum  
Nuclear Information and Resource Service  
Our Revolution Baltimore  
Patuxent Riverkeeper  
River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
Safe Skies Maryland  
Sierra Club Maryland  
St. Matthew Catholic Church and Blessed  
Sacrament Catholic Church  
Sunrise Movement Baltimore  
Sunrise Movement Howard County  
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment  
Committee  
The Climate Mobilization, Montgomery County  
The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland  
The Maryland Episcopal Public Policy network  
Transition Howard County  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of  
Maryland  
Western Maryland Green New Deal  
WISE